

APPLICATION
for
UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT
SPECIFICATION

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

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have invented new and useful Quick-Install, Flush-Mount Bracket for Light and Other
Fixtures of which the following is a specification.

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**QUICK-INSTALL, FLUSH-MOUNT BRACKET
FOR LIGHT AND OTHER FIXTURES**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Cross References to Related Applications

This application claims benefit of co-pending application serial number 09/792,698 filed on February 23, 2001, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to light fixtures for mounting to ceilings and walls. More particularly, this invention relates to bracket assemblies that facilitate mounting of light and other fixtures to wall or ceiling-mounted electrical receptacle boxes.

Description of the Background Art

Presently, there exists many types of light fixtures that are designed to be ceiling or wall mounted. Typically, lights as well as other fixtures, are mounted over electrical receptacle boxes installed within the wall or ceiling such that the wiring of the fixture may be easily connected to the household wiring contained within the electrical receptacle box.

Various brackets have been designed for facilitating the

mounting of lights and other fixtures to electrical boxes. The most common type of bracket consists of a mounting plate having holes that are dimensioned and aligned with the standardized threaded holes of the electrical receptacle box. Unfortunately, prior art brackets are often configured in such a manner that the bracket must first be mounted to the electrical box and then the fixture mounted to the bracket, both through the use of screws or other threaded fasteners. Consequently, there presently exists a need for a quick-install mounting bracket that facilitates the quick and easy installation of light and other fixtures to an electrical box installed within a wall or ceiling.

Therefore, it is an object of this invention to provide an improvement which overcomes the aforementioned inadequacies of the prior art devices and provides an improvement which is a significant contribution to the advancement of the wall or ceiling mounting bracket art.

Another object of this invention is to provide an electrical box bracket for allowing a light fixture to be easily mounted to an electrical box flush with the wall or ceiling in which the electrical box is installed.

Another object of this invention is to provide a quick install, flush-mount bracket for lights and other fixtures having one subbracket mounted to the electrical box and another subbracket mounted to the light

fixture, with such subbrackets being easily coupled together such that the light fixture may be easily mounted to the electrical box flush with the wall or ceiling.

Another object of this invention is to provide a quick-install, flush mount bracket for lights and other fixtures that includes a first subbracket that may be mounted to or made integral with the electrical box and a second subbracket that may be mounted to or made integral with the light fixture with such subbrackets being easily coupled together such that the light fixture may be easily mounted to the electrical box flush with the wall or ceiling.

Another object of this invention is to provide a quick-install, flush mount bracket for lights and other fixtures that includes a first subbracket that may be mounted to the ceiling or wall and a second subbracket constructed integrally with or attached to the light fixture with such subbrackets being easily coupled together such that the light fixture may be easily mounted to the ceiling or wall.

Another object of this invention is to provide a quick-install, flush-mount bracket for lights and other fixtures that includes a first subbracket that may be pre-installed with the electrical box during construction and another subbracket that may be installed with the light

fixture, possibly at the factory during manufacture, such that the light fixture can be easily installed without any particular expertise or tools on the part of the consumer.

The foregoing has outlined some of the pertinent objects of the invention. These objects should be construed to be merely illustrative of some of the more prominent features and applications of the intended invention. Many other beneficial results can be attained by applying the disclosed invention in a different manner or modifying the invention within the scope of the disclosure. Accordingly, other objects and a fuller understanding of the invention may be had by referring to the summary of the invention and the detailed description of the preferred embodiment in addition to the scope of the invention defined by the claims taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

For the purpose of summarizing this invention, this invention comprises a quick-install, flush-mount bracket for lights and other fixtures. More particularly, the bracket of the invention is designed to facilitate the quick installation of a light or other fixture to an electrical box installed within a wall or ceiling in such a manner that the fixture is mounted flush with the wall or ceiling.

The bracket of the invention comprises numerous embodiments, each including complementary male and female subbrackets. One of the subbrackets is configured and dimensioned to be mounted to the threaded mounting holes of an electrical junction box (the spacing and thread of which are standardized throughout the industry). The other subbracket is configured to be mounted to the light or other fixture. The subbrackets are complementarily designed to be quickly fastened together such that the fixture may be quickly and easily mounted to the electrical box flush with the wall or ceiling in which the box is installed.

The invention's subbrackets may be sold as a kit and included with the light fixture or sold separately for use in conjunction with existing light fixtures. Alternatively, the subbracket connected to the fixture may be pre-installed at the factory during manufacture of the light fixture.

Similarly, the subbracket to be mounted to the electrical box may be pre-mounted to the electrical box at the factory, or before, during, or immediately after construction of the wall or ceiling. In this manner, once the construction is completed (i.e., drywall installed and painted), the fixtures may be quickly and easily installed without any special expertise or tools.

Finally it is noted that for the purposes of the following description and the claims, the subbrackets may be respectively integrally formed with the light fixture and/or the electrical box to thereby eliminate the need for having separate components that must then be assembled together and therefore all references to subbrackets encompass being so integrally formed as well as being a separate component.

The foregoing has outlined rather broadly the more pertinent and important features of the present invention in order that the detailed description of the invention that follows may be better understood so that the present contribution to the art can be more fully appreciated. Additional features of the invention will be described hereinafter which form the subject of the claims of the invention. It should be appreciated by those skilled in the art that the conception and the specific embodiment disclosed may be readily utilized as a basis for modifying or designing other structures for carrying out the same purposes of the present invention. It should also be realized by

those skilled in the art that such equivalent constructions do not depart from the spirit and scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

For a fuller understanding of the nature and objects of the invention, reference should be had to the following detailed description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of the bracket assembly of the invention, partially exploded and partially in cross-section showing the intended coupling of the subbrackets of the bracket assembly;

Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the first embodiment of the bracket assembly of the invention, similar to that of Fig. 1, but with the subbracket being connected to a conventional receptacle box;

Fig. 3 is a side elevational view, partially in cross-section, showing the initiation of the coupling between the subbrackets of the first embodiment of the bracket assembly shown in Figs. 1 and 2;

Fig. 4 is a side elevational view, partially in cross-section showing the complete coupling of the subbrackets of Fig. 3 such that the light fixture is mounted flush with the wall or ceiling in which the electrical box is installed;

Fig. 5 is an exploded perspective view of one of the subbrackets of the first embodiment of the bracket assembly showing the assembly thereof;

Fig. 6 is a perspective view, partially in cross-section, showing the second embodiment of the bracket assembly of the invention and the manner in which the subbracket thereof is mounted to a conventional electrical box;

Fig. 7 is a side elevational view of the second embodiment of the bracket assembly of the invention showing the manner in which the subbrackets thereof are initially coupled;

Fig. 8 is a side elevational view of the second embodiment of the bracket assembly of the invention showing the complete coupling of the subbrackets of the bracket assembly such that the light fixture is mounted flush to the wall or ceiling in which the electrical box is installed;

Fig. 9 is a perspective view, partially in cross-section, showing the second embodiment of the invention similar to that of Figs. 6-8, but with the positioning of the male and female subbrackets being reversed relative to the electrical box and fixture;

Fig. 10 is a side elevational view, partially cut away, showing the initiation of the male subbracket connection to the fixture being inserted into the female bracket installed on the junction box;

Fig. 11 is a side elevational view similar to that of Fig. 10, but with the subbrackets being fully coupled together to flush-mount the fixture

to the ceiling;

Fig. 12 is a side elevational view, partially in cross-section, showing the third embodiment of the bracket assembly of the invention;

Fig. 13 is a side elevational view of the third embodiment of the bracket assembly showing the initiation of the coupling of the subbrackets thereof;

Fig. 14 is a side elevational view, partially in cross-section, showing the complete coupling of the subbrackets of Fig. 13 such that the fixture is mounted to the electrical box flush with the ceiling or wall in which the box is installed;

Fig. 15 is a perspective view, partially in cross-section of the fourth embodiment of the bracket assembly of the invention;

Fig. 16 is a perspective view, partially in cross-section, of Fig. 15 showing the retaining plate of the male subbracket being positioned so as to align the ends thereof with the corresponding female subbracket formed integrally with the light fixture;

Fig. 17 is a side elevational view of Fig. 16 showing alignment of the respective subbrackets thereof; and

Fig. 18 is a side elevational view, partially in cross-section, showing the complete coupling of the male and female subbrackets of Fig. 16

such that the fixture is mounted flush to the wall or ceiling in which the electrical box is mounted.

Similar reference characters refer to similar parts throughout the several views of the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Figs. 1-18 illustrate the various embodiments of the bracket assembly 10 of the invention designed to easily couple a light or other fixture 12 to a conventional electrical box receptacle 14 such that the fixture 12 may be flush-mounted to the ceiling or wall 16 in which the electrical box 14 is installed. In each embodiment, the bracket assembly 10 comprises a male subbracket 18 and a female subbracket 20 adapted for installation relative to the fixture 12 or electrical box 14, respectively or vice versa, to facilitate easy flush-mount installation of the light fixture to the electrical box 14.

Figs. 1-5 illustrate the first embodiment of the bracket assembly 10 of the invention. In this first embodiment, the male subbracket 18 is mounted to the light fixture 12 and the female subbracket 20 is mounted to the electrical box 14. More particularly, the male subbracket 18 comprises a generally inverted U-shaped mounting plate 22 having radially extending flanged legs 24. The flanged legs 24 of the plate 22 serve to allow the mounting plate to be installed to the topside 12T of the light fixture 12 by means of fasteners 26 such as threaded fasteners, rivets, or the like. A threaded stud 26 is coupled through a hole in the plate 22 and secured into position by opposing threaded nuts 30A and 30B, in such a manner that the threaded stud 26 extends upwardly from the plate 22. However, it is noted

that the subbracket 18 may be integrally formed with the light fixture 12 such that the threaded stud 26 is threaded directly to the light fixture 12 to thereby eliminate the need for having a separate plate 22 with flanged legs 24 that must then be assembled to the top surface 12T of the fixture 12.

The female subbracket 20 of the first embodiment comprises a generally flat mounting plate 32 having a center hole 32H and a pair of mounting holes 34 at opposing ends thereof to allow the mounting plate 32 to be threadedly fastened to the threaded holes 36 of the electrical box 14. In this regard, it is noted that the spacing of the threaded holes 36, as well as their thread size, is standard throughout the industry. It is also noted that the mounting holes 34 of the mounting plate 32 of the invention may comprise slots as shown to facilitate the ease in which the mounting plate 32 can be mounted to the electrical box 14 via the screws 38.

The female subbracket 20 further comprises a leaf plate 40 having opposing leafs 40L circumscribing a center hole 40H defined by longitudinal slots 40L and transverse slots 40T (see Fig. 5), the center hole 40H having a diameter appreciably less than the outer diameter of the threaded stud 28. The leaf plate 40 is fastened to the mounting plate 32 by means of fasteners 42 such as threaded fasteners or rivets, such that the center hole 40H of the leaf plate 40 is concentrically aligned with the center

hole 32H of the mounting plate 32.

As shown in Fig. 3, the male subbracket 18 may be easily coupled to the female subbracket 20 by merely pushing the threaded stud 28 of the male subbracket 18 through the hole 32H of the mounting plate 32 and then through the smaller diameter hole 40H of the leaf plate 40. During the initiation of such insertion, the opposing leafs 40L defined by the slots 40L and 40T spread upwardly and partially away from each other to allow the threaded stud 28 to be fully installed therein. As shown in Fig. 4, upon full insertion of the threaded stud 28 of the male subbracket 18 into the female subbracket 20, fixture 12 is flush-mounted to the ceiling or wall 16 in which the electrical box 14 is installed.

It is noted that the use of the threaded stud 28 and the leaf plate 40 compensates for any non-flush installation of the electrical box 14 relative to the surface of the ceiling or wall 16. Specifically, in the event the electrical box 14 is improperly mounted somewhat recessed from the outer surface of the ceiling or wall 16, the threaded stud 28 is still sufficiently long to penetrate the center hole 40H of the leaf spring 40 to be retained thereby. Further, it is noted that any downward force exerted on the light fixture 12 after coupling, will merely result in the edges of the leaf plate 40 that define the hole 40H, being forced into the troughs of the threads of the threaded

stud 28 to even more fully enhance the respective coupling thereof. Finally, it is noted that in the event the light fixture 12 may need to be removed, it could be removed by merely rotating the light fixture 12 in a counter-clockwise direction so as to unthread the threaded stud 28 from the leaf plate 40 (and indeed the leafs 40L may be arcuately formed to better match the pitch of the thread to thereby facilitate unthreading). However, if the fixture is electrically wired to the household wiring contained within the electrical box 14, removal is not permitted due to such wiring that would wrap around the threaded stud 28 during rotation. In such situations, the preferred removal method would comprise removal of the fasteners 26 of the flange legs 24 to release the fixture 12, whereupon the threaded stud 28 of the male subbracket 18 may then be unthreaded from the leaf plate 40.

The second embodiment of the bracket assembly 10 of the invention is disclosed in Figs. 6-14. More particularly, the male subbracket 18 of the second embodiment of the bracket assembly 10 comprises a pair of downwardly-extending spring clips 44, preferably composed of a spring steel, that engages into corresponding slots 46 formed in the female subbracket 20. As shown in Figs. 6-8, the male subbracket 18 including the spring clips 44 may be mounted to the electrical box 14 or, alternatively as shown in Figs. 9-11, the male subbracket 18 may be formed integrally with the top side 12T of

the fixture 12 with the spring clips 44 extending upwardly therefrom for insertion into the female subbracket 20 mounted to the electrical box 14.

More particularly, as shown in Figs. 6-8, spring clips 44 each comprise a generally inverted U-shaped configuration having legs 48. One leg 48 includes a plurality of indentations or teeth 48T facing outwardly. The other leg 48 may likewise include outwardly facing teeth 48T, but preferably is smooth-configured with its tip 48P arced inwardly as shown. Each of the spring clips 44 is mounted to a mounting plate 52 (similar to mounting plate 32 of the first embodiment) for connection to the electrical box 14 through the use of mounting holes 34 and screws 38, as described above in connection with mounting plate 32 of the first embodiment. Each of the spring clips 44 are securely connected to the mounting plate 52 in a spaced-apart configuration by means of fasteners 54 such as screws or rivets. As shown, the pair of spring clips 44 are oriented such that the teeth 48T of their respective legs 48 face outwardly.

The female subbracket 20 of the second embodiment of the invention is formed integrally with the topside 12T of the fixture 12 and comprises the paired slots 46 that are spaced apart from each other in alignment with the spaced-apart paired spring clips 44. As best shown in Fig. 7, the length of each of the slots 46 is appreciably less than the outer

dimensions of the legs 48 of the spring clips 44. In this manner, when the spring clips 44 are aligned with the slots 46, legs 48 must be resiliently squeezed inwardly during initial insertion of them into the slots 46. As best shown in Fig. 8, this inward bending of the legs 48 cause the teeth 48T of leg 48 to function as a ratchet as the spring clips 44 are further inserted into the slots 46. Consequently, the fixture 12 may be easily mounted to the electrical box 14 flush with the surface of the ceiling or wall 16 even in situations in which the electrical box 14 is not itself precisely flush with the ceiling or wall 16. It is noted that removal of the fixture 12 may be easily accomplished by simply squeezing the legs 48 together for each of the spring clips 44 until the teeth 48T of the leg 48 is released from the edge of the slots 46.

Figs. 9-11 similarly illustrate the second embodiment of the bracket assembly 10 of the invention, but with the male and female subbrackets 18 and 20 being reversed. Specifically, as shown in Fig. 9, slots 46 of the female subbracket 20 may be formed within the mounting plate 32 mounted to the electrical box 14. Conversely, spring clips 44 may be mounted via the fasteners 54 to the top side 12T of the fixture 12 (such topside 12T thereby functioning as the male subbracket 18).

As shown in Fig. 10, the relative alignment of the spring clips 44 relative to the slots 46 allows the spring clips 44 to ratchet completely

inwardly into the slots 46 such that the fixture 12 is flush-mounted to the ceiling or wall 16 (see Fig. 11). It is noted that removal of the fixture 12 is rendered more difficult when the male subbracket 18 is mounted relative to the fixture 12 due to the inability to gain access to the legs 48 to squeeze them and cause them to release from the slots 46 of the female subbracket 20. Accordingly, access holes 56 may be provided in the top side 12T of the fixture 12 in alignment with the screws 38 to facilitate removal thereof and hence removal of the fixture 12.

Figs. 12-14 illustrate a modification to the second embodiment wherein the leg 48 includes a lip 48L in lieu of the teeth 48T as shown and described in connection with Figs. 6-11 above. As shown in Fig. 13, the spring clips 44 having the single lip 48L include an outer diameter between the legs 48 that is appreciably less than the slots 46 such that the legs 48 have to be forced inwardly in order to be inserted into the slots 46. As shown in Fig. 14, once inserted into the slots 46, the lip 48L of leg 48 engages underneath the edge of the slot 46. Once the lips 48L of the respective spring clips 44 are thus engaged, the fixture 12 is securely mounted relative to the electrical box 14. However, unlike the versions shown in Figs. 6-11, the single lip 48L of leg 48 does not provide the degree of adjustability as was described above in connection with the teeth 48T of leg 48 of the spring clips

44 of Figs. 6-11. Finally, it is noted that without departing from the spirit and scope of this invention, the configuration shown in Figs. 12-14 may be reversed similar to that of Figs. 9-11.

Finally, Figs. 15-18 illustrate the third embodiment of the bracket assembly 10 of the invention. This third embodiment is similar to that of the second embodiment of Figs. 6-14, but in lieu of the paired spring clips 44 shown in connection therewith, this third embodiment includes a male subbracket 18 having a single spring clip 60. The spring clip 60 includes a generally inverted U-shaped configuration with legs 62. Each of the legs 62 further include an outwardly extending extension 66 having an inturned end 68. Preferably, the extensions 66 to the legs 62 extend substantially radially outwardly as shown in Fig. 15. The spring clip 60 is connected to the male subbracket 18 by means of a fastener 72 such as a threaded fastener or rivet. The mounting plate 70 is connected to the electrical box 14 by means of screws 38 in the manner described above.

The female subbracket 20 of the third embodiment is similarly integrally formed in the topside 12T of the fixture 12 and comprises a pair of slots 74 dimensioned so as to receive the extensions 66 of legs 62.

In order to facilitate insertion of the extensions 66 into the slots 74, a squeeze plate 76 is provided. The squeeze plate 76 comprises a

generally elongated design having slots 78 at its ends for receiving the respective extensions 66 of legs 62 , with the respective centers of slots 78 being approximately equal to the relaxed distance between the leg 62 (see Fig. 15). To facilitate assembly, the squeeze plate 76 is slid downwardly along the legs 62 and their extensions 66 to the inturned end 68 thereby causing extensions 66 to be squeezed together to a generally parallel configuration as shown in Fig. 16 with the squeeze plate 76 being retained by the inturned ends 68. As such, as shown in Fig. 17, the now parallel-positioned extensions 66 are in alignment with the respective slots 74 so that the extensions 66 may be inserted therein. As shown in Fig. 18, as the fixture 12 is forced upwardly, the squeeze plate 76 is likewise forced upwardly allowing the extensions 66 to return to their original non-parallel, radially-outwardly extending configuration. The fixture 12 is thus secured relative to the electrical box 14 flush with the ceiling or wall 16 in which the box 14 is installed. However, it is noted that fixture 12 may be removed by squeezing on the inturned ends 68 of the extensions 66 of the legs 62 to force them into a generally parallel alignment thereby releasing the fixture 12.

In each of the embodiments of the bracket assembly 10 of the invention, a tether, generally indicated by numeral 80, may be provided to interconnect the male subbracket 18 and the female subbracket 20. While

many embodiments of the tether may suffice, a preferred tether 80 comprises one end having a T-bar configuration for insertion within a hole 82 formed in one of the subbrackets 18 or 20 and the other end of the tether 80 may be permanently affixed to the other subbracket 20 or 18 (see Figs. 1 & 2). In this manner, the T-bar end 82 of the tether 80 may be easily coupled to the subbracket 18 or 20 allowing the fixture 12 to hang therefrom. While hanging, the fixture 12 may be conveniently wired to the electrical household wiring contained within the electrical box 14.

The present disclosure includes that contained in the appended claims, as well as that of the foregoing description. Although this invention has been described in its preferred form with a certain degree of particularity, it is understood that the present disclosure of the preferred form has been made only by way of example and that numerous changes in the details of construction and the combination and arrangement of parts may be resorted to without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

Now that the invention has been described,

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS: